

The Northern Frontier



Special
Resource Study
Summary

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) has released a report entitled “The Northern Frontier Special Resource Study” for public comment. The study was sponsored by Congressman Sherwood Boehlert (24th District, NY) to ensure the significant sites, artifacts and related activities of the Northern Frontier are evaluated and options addressed for future designation. Copies of the study are available upon request from Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome, New York. The study is also available on-line at www.nps.gov/fost/pphtml/facts.html. Written comments on the study will be accepted and may be sent to Superintendent, Fort Stanwix National Monument, 112 E. Park Street, Rome, New York 13440.

The Northern Frontier study area extends over an expanse of lands situated in present-day upstate New York. This region was a frontier of European settlement and for centuries had been the home of numerous indigenous peoples, notably members of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. For a period of over eighty-five years (1730-1815) the Northern Frontier became one of the most hotly contested landscapes in the struggle for control of North America. On this landscape the struggles of three wars (French and Indian, 1755-63; American Revolution, 1775-1781; and the War of 1812, 1812-15) occurred. These wars fractured the frontier settlements as well as the Great Peace that bounded the Iroquois people together. The Northern Frontier is an important landscape in American history.



Mortally wounded, General Herkimer continued to direct his men in the bloody Battle of Oriskany.

PAINTED BY F.C. YOUNG. (CREDIT: UTICA PUBLIC LIBRARY)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A Special Resource Study (SRS) is a planning tool utilized by the NPS to evaluate areas for potential inclusion or affiliation within the National Park System. The NPS in consultation with the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) commenced this study in 1998. A key ingredient for the completion of this SRS was the involvement of grass-roots organizations and private citizens. Local support resulted in the creation of the Northern Frontier Project, Inc., a not-for-profit organization established to promote a greater understanding of the region's historic resources.

(CREDIT: CHERYL DOBLE)

Study Process & Sources



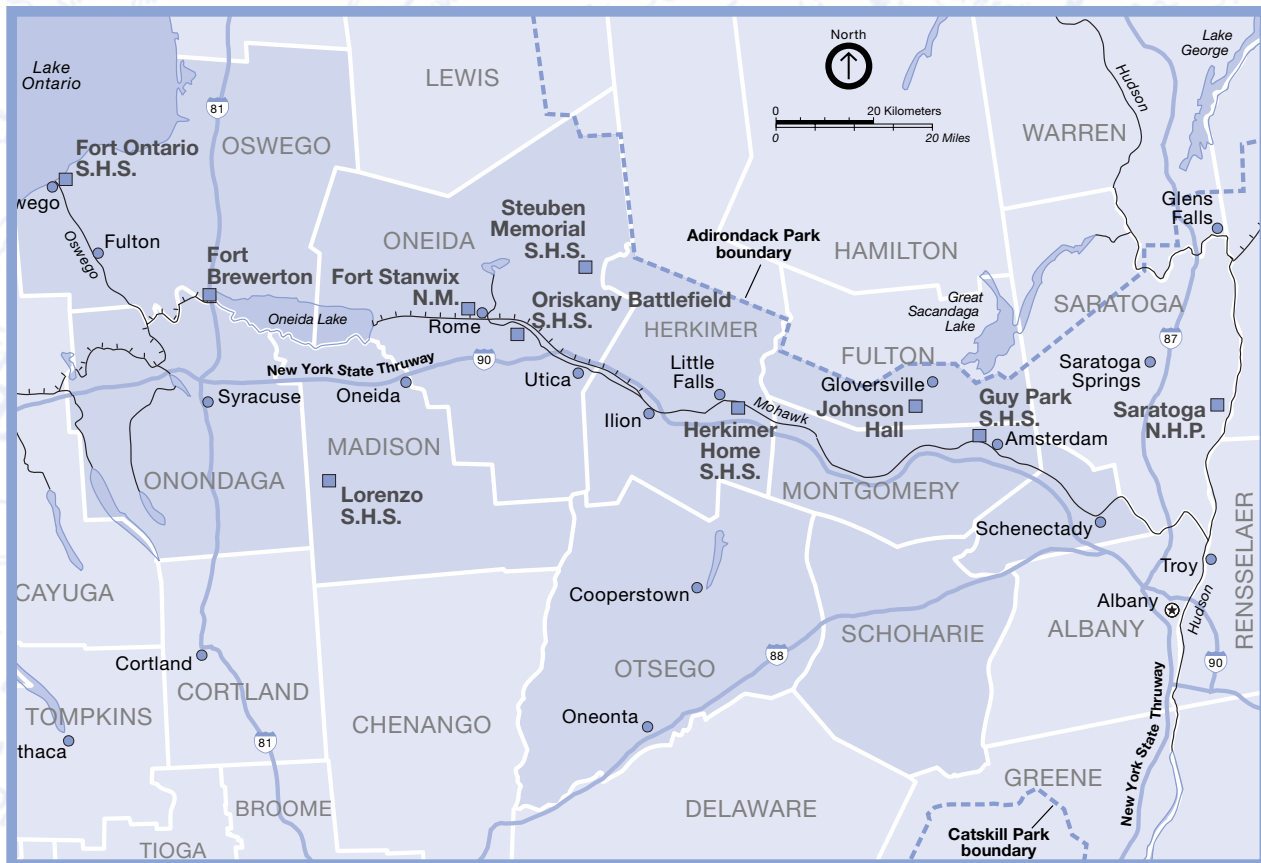
*Johnson Hall —
a major historic
resource of the
Northern Frontier*
(CREDIT: DUDLEY BREED)

This SRS was guided by the National Park Service's policy for evaluating proposed heritage areas and the National Park Service's framework for identifying historic themes.

The following five steps were taken:

- Describe the Northern Frontier
- Define the Northern Frontier Study area and the historic themes of the Northern Frontier
- Compare the Northern Frontier with other heritage areas and NPS units
- Develop management alternatives
- Consider the National Park Service role

The Northern Frontier is the name given to lands situated in what is now Upstate New York and southern Canada. It was the frontier of European settlement and had been the home of a number of native people including the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The study area included all or portions of ten counties in Upstate New York including: Oswego, Onondaga, Madison, Oneida, Herkimer, Fulton, Montgomery, Otsego, Schoharie, and Schenectady.



Themes of the Northern Frontier

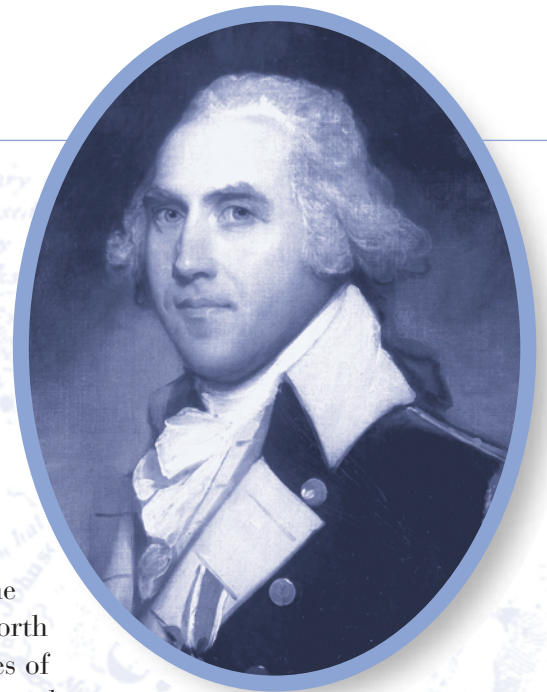
The Northern Frontier Special Resource Study evaluated resources associated with military actions and the more general events of “nation building.” The four compelling themes of the Northern Frontier story are: (1) Military Chronicles, (2) Iroquois Experience, (3) Diversity of Cultures, and (4) Geographic Opportunity.

MILITARY CHRONICLES

For a period of over 80 years, the Northern Frontier was one of the most hotly contested landscapes in the struggle for dominion of North America. It was an important strategic region marked with decades of conflicts among several groups including American Indian nations and competing groups of Europeans who at one time or another clashed within and across several cultural boundaries.

IROQUOIS EXPERIENCE

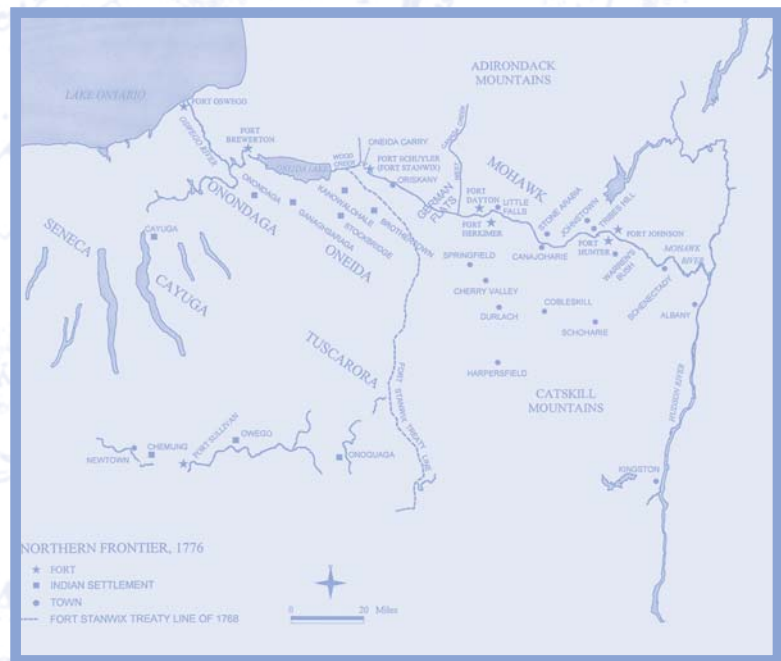
A defining aspect of the Northern Frontier was the dominance of the Iroquois Confederacy that strongly influenced both military actions and settlement patterns. The northeastern quarter of what is now the United States of America was home to many Indian peoples who had large populations and significant presence. Many tribes spoke a form of the Iroquois language and shared similar cultural traditions, but did not belong to the Iroquois Confederacy.



Peter Gansevoort, Commander of the American Garrison at Fort Stanwix during the Siege of 1777.

PAINTING BY GILBERT STUART, CIRCA 1794.

(CREDIT: MUNSON-WILLIAMS-PROCTOR INSTITUTE OF ART)



Iroquois country; circa 1776.

(AFTER GRAYMONT 1972:XII)

The great Mohawk chief, King Hendrick, painted by Jan Verelst in 1710.

(CREDIT: COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA)



*Celebrating the
Onondaga
Nation Fall
Festival.*

(CREDIT: STEPHEN D.
CANNIBELL, SYRACUSE
NEWSPAPERS)

DIVERSITY OF CULTURES

The Northern Frontier was inhabited by numerous Native American tribes and

settlers primarily from England, Holland and Germany, with scattered representation from France, Ireland, Scotland, Africa and other places. The diversity of cultures contributed greatly to the Northern Frontier and further investigations may reveal contributions made by additional groups.

GEOGRAPHIC OPPORTUNITY

The natural landscape of the Northern Frontier formed a basis for the region's cultural development by way of transportation, trade and defense opportunities. The Northern Frontier is connected by major rivers, lakes and a natural pass in the Appalachian chain. The control of these routes is key to understanding the history of the region. The success of the Iroquois is in part attributable to their control of these routes. The natural landscape contributed to the commercial and military success of the British and American efforts to dominate this region. Later, the citizens of the area capitalized on the natural landscape through the construction of the Erie Canal, railroads and toll ways. Although the patterns of land use and cover have changed since the days of the Northern Frontier, the natural features that are most important to the story — the lowland corridor of the Mohawk Valley and its waterways — remain intact.



Mohawk River

(CREDIT: DUDLEY BREED)

SUMMARY COMPARISON OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
	Northern Frontier National Heritage Area	Fort Stanwix National Monument Links to Northern Frontier Heritage Resources	New York State Heritage Area	Continuation of Current Practices (No Action)
Management Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Heritage Area Commission representing private owners/managers of Northern Frontier resources, local governments, state agencies, the NPS, Americans Indians, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination through Fort Stanwix National Monument. NPS collaborates on projects and programs with other Northern Frontier sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources managed by MVHCC or new state management entity. Other New York State agencies, local government and resource managers would participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing management entities continue their operations. There is no change in the current level of involvement by the NPS.
Federal Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused support from the NPS and other federal agencies for projects and programs that are developed through the Commission and from local initiatives. Federal involvement is typically reviewed after 10 years. \$350,000 for operations and \$650,000 for grants per year, both requiring a 50% match from non-federal sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused support from the NPS and other federal agencies for projects and programs proposed by managers of eligible resources. Involvement tied to Fort Stanwix National Monument is permanent. \$250,000 for annual operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current levels of assistance and NPS involvement for technical support and other services remain unchanged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current levels of assistance and NPS involvement for technical support and other services remain unchanged.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and international recognition of resources. Significant additional technical assistance and financial support dedicated to Northern Frontier resource preservation and heritage tourism development. Coordination may lead to larger scale programs and infrastructure. Partnerships with grassroots efforts. 10-year financial commitment by federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced recognition of resources. Targeted technical assistance and financial support for Northern Frontier resource preservation and heritage tourism development. Limited financial assistance by federal government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State recognition of resources. Additional state technical assistance and financial support dedicated to Northern Frontier resource preservation and heritage tourism development. Eligibility for funding programs that exclude federal entities. Coordination may lead to larger scale programs and infrastructure. Partnerships with grassroots efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility for funding that excludes federal entities.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local concerns about property rights may be expressed. Increased costs to federal government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased costs to federal government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No increase of federal technical assistance and expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No increase of federal technical assistance and expertise. Potential loss of resources. Limited coordination of managed resources. No marketing effort focused on the Northern Frontier.
<p>Key: NPS—National Park Service. MVHCC—Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission. NYSOPRHP—New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.</p>				

The
Northern
Frontier
Special Resource Study

For more information and to request a copy of the Northern Frontier Special Resource Study, contact:

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